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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM GV

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS TOO EXPENSIVE - MAYBE WE SHOULD WAIT

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. A senior contact within the majority party revealed that certain unidentified elements may be exploring the possibility of delaying legislative elections until 2010. Citing concerns over the \$21 million budget line item for election preparations, some individuals are reportedly arguing that the money would be better spent if they waited and held presidential and legislative elections at the same time. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On September 26, poloff met with Aliou Banire Diallo, President of the Party for Unity and Progress (PUP) Parliamentary Group within the National Assembly and a member of the party's executive board. Joining Diallo was Cheick Tidiane Traore, the youngest deputy to the National Assembly.

¶3. (C) Commenting on the opening of the regular budget session on September 25, Diallo said that many National Assembly deputies are concerned over the \$21 million budget line item for legislative elections. According to Diallo, some feel that this is an excessive amount of money when the country has so many other priorities. While avoiding specifics, Diallo said that there are &emerging tendencies<sup>8</sup> to delay elections until 2010 so that they can be held simultaneously with the scheduled presidential elections, thereby making more efficient use of government funds.

¶4. (C) Diallo added that holding presidential and legislative elections together would also avoid the possibility of having a president of one party and a legislature of another. He pointed to the constitutional provision which requires that the a newly convened National Assembly must be allowed to operate for a period of three years before it can be dissolved by the President. &If we elect the National Assembly in 2008 and the president in 2010, the president will not be able to dissolve the National Assembly until 2011...so we could have at least a year where the government is internally divided.<sup>8</sup> He added that if the elections were held simultaneously, there would be a better chance that the same party would win both branches of government.

¶5. (C) In response, poloff emphasized that strong democracies are inherently tolerant of differing viewpoints, pointing to the current balance of power between two parties in the U.S. system. Poloff also stressed that long-term delays in holding legislative elections would likely be ill-received by the local population and could spark further unrest.

¶6. (C) COMMENT. Diallo's statements may simply be a testing of the water on a diplomatic level. The Guinean people are unlikely to accept a four-year delay in elections and may well take to the streets in response. Diallo did not specify whether these &tendencies<sup>8</sup> were coming from civil society or from within government. However, a possible

political tactic would be for certain National Assembly members to quietly whisper the idea to others and then have them voice it in order to see what the reaction is. PUP members may be beginning to sense that they have much to do to if they want to win support in the upcoming elections. The argument that the government may be divided if different parties win different offices demonstrates that further exposure to democratic principles and practices is needed.

¶7. (SBU). Embassy officials at all levels will continue to emphasize the importance of holding timely, transparent legislative elections as an important component of a strong democratic system. END COMMENT.

CARTER